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**LEGAL AID**  
OF NORTH CAROLINA

# 2021 ANNUAL REPORT

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# LETTER FROM LEADERSHIP

Friends,

Since our beginning, we have been in the pursuit of equal access to justice for all North Carolinians. This pursuit is a daily endeavor, requiring an inextinguishable passion for social justice and the relentless attempt to protect the most vulnerable in our state. Our funders, volunteers, and partner organizations have walked with us to provide justice for all not only last year but throughout our existence. We have walked together these past twenty years to live out the commitment to our mission. Your dedication to ameliorating poverty and ensuring fairness has been inspiring to all of us at Legal Aid of North Carolina.

Our position as the only statewide legal services organization offers us the ability to form meaningful relationships and engage in effective outreach in all 100 counties of our state. Our statewide presence ensures we can provide equal access to justice and protect the dignity of our neighbors, but the need is great, and our resources limited. Our advocates focus daily on securing justice for our clients knowing these legal outcomes have a direct correlation to our client’s economic opportunity beyond the court room. Putting basic human needs like housing, economic stability, healthcare, and safety at the forefront of what we do has given us the opportunity to break the cycle of poverty and ensure the long-term success of North Carolina’s many diverse communities.

I am proud of what Legal Aid of North Carolina has achieved in the past twenty years and I am excited to lead this wonderful organization into the next twenty years. I am humbled to work with attorneys, paralegals, social workers, staff and volunteers that who are wholeheartedly committed to our mission, incredibly talented and uniquely resourceful. I hope that you find this report to be a comprehensive example of the impact we have on access to justice in North Carolina, and our potential to do so much more.



**Ashley H. Campbell**  
Executive Director



**Gonzalo Frias**  
Board Chair  
Wells Fargo Senior Company Counsel



# IMPACT TIMELINE

## 2002 Legal Aid of North Carolina opens

Consolidating legal services offices throughout the state, Legal Aid of North Carolina opens its doors as the only statewide civil legal services organization, and the 3rd largest law firm in North Carolina.

## 2004 12th Anniversary of the Everett Fellowship

Established in 1992, the Everett fellowship was instituted to honor Clifton W. Everett Sr. To honor Everett's commitment to serving rural areas, fellows have the opportunity handle cases in traditional areas of poverty law in rural NC communities. To learn more about this opportunity, our 3 other fellowships honoring Charles D. Dixon, Judge Samuel J. Ervin III, and Julian T. Pierce, or our MLK internship program visit [www.legalaidnc.org/get-involved](http://www.legalaidnc.org/get-involved).

## 2007 Medical Legal Partnership begins

LANC works to form community relationships to more opportunities for vulnerable North Carolinians to receive the civil legal help they need. Working with community clinics as well as regional and statewide healthcare centers, advocates across multiple fields work to identify possible legal solutions to intersecting issues of daily life such as housing conditions, income, nutrition, and education.

## 2010 Senior Law Project starts senior legal helpline

LANC's Asheville based Senior Law Project launches a toll-free hotline for all North Carolinians 60 years or older. It provides advice and brief service, and transfers cases requiring more extensive services. Helpline staff are trained in trauma-informed interviewing techniques and how to spot for elder abuse or financial exploitation.

## 2011 Lawyer on the line pro bono partnership with the NCBA launches

LANC and the North Carolina Bar Association team up to operate a legal helpline where clients can receive legal advice and brief service from pro bono volunteers. On its 5th anniversary 1,001 attorney volunteers had provided an estimated \$4 million in pro bono services to over 15,000 North Carolinians.



Staff honor Ted Fillette upon his retirement after 45 years of service, 2018



Staff attends the "Leaders in the Law" Luncheon, 2011



Senior Law Project Staff, 2017



Staff Attorneys volunteer for the NCBA 4all service day, 2013

## 2014 Veteran's Project launches

LANC's Veterans Law Project opens its doors to help low-income veterans with legal problems related to disability compensation, discharge upgrades, pension benefits and VA overpayments.

## 2016 \$1 Million Settlement for Fair Housing Project

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development announces a \$1 million settlement agreement to resolve allegations of racially discriminatory lending practices made by LANC Fair Housing Project attorneys against Fidelity Bank. Payments went towards community development loans for minority communities, with 40% of the funds specifically promoting affordable housing.

## 2018 Dept. of Education reaches agreement in ACS lawsuit against Durham Public Schools

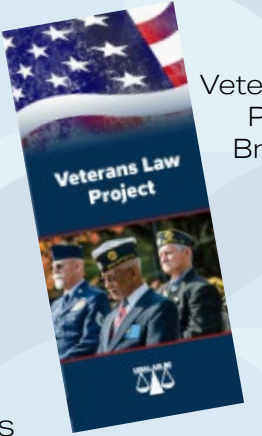
Complaints made by LANC's Advocate's for Children's Services (ACS) against Durham Public Schools over their discriminatory discipline actions for minority and disabled children result in the district being placed under federal monitoring by the Department of Education and its Office for Civil rights and made to rigorously review and develop new disciplinary policies and practices.

## 2019 \$75,000 Settlement for Farmworker Unit

LANC's Farmworker Unit secures \$75,000 in a labor trafficking lawsuit against a labor contractor working under the federal H-2A visa program after 13 migrant farmworkers were charged unlawful fees, paid less than minimum wage, lied to about their chances of staying in the U.S., denied worker's compensation, given substandard housing, and denied or restricted access to medical care and their own social security cards, as well as being subject to numerous other violations.



Murphy Staff on move-in day, 2021



Veteran's Law Project Brochure



Fayetteville Staff wear purple for Domestic Violence awareness, 2020



Farmworker Unit Attorneys spending the day with the North Carolina Migrant Education Program, 2022

## Murphy Office Opens

## 2021

LANC opens a new office in Murphy in a building on the grounds of St. William Catholic Church, sharing a building with Catholic Charities. Serving as a relocation of the Hayesville branch that recently closed after 20 years in operation, our Murphy office will help us to improve service to Cherokee, Clay, and Graham Counties.



# YEAR IN REVIEW

## Legal Services

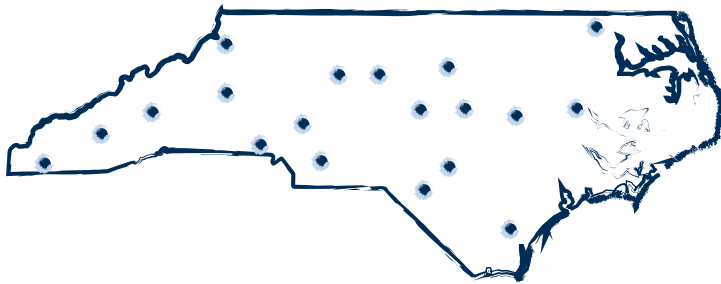
We are intent on ensuring high quality legal services are provided to North Carolinians living in poverty. In 2021, we continued to offer services for a variety of civil legal issues through our 15 projects and worked with the NC Medicaid Ombudsmen program through a partnership with the NC Department of Health and Human Services.

Our unique service model combines local, accessible offices with special projects that are staffed with lawyers who are experts in their practice area. This approach ensures that clients receive the best advocacy possible.

- The Battered Immigrant Project
- Disaster Relief Project
- Domestic Violence Prevention Initiative
- Durham Eviction Diversion
- Tenant Eviction Diversion
- Economic Justice Initiative
- Fair Housing Project
- Farmworker Unit
- Medical Legal Partnership
- Mortgage Foreclosure Prevention Project
- NC Navigator Consortium
- Right to Education Project
- Senior Law Project
- The Child’s Advocate
- Veteran’s Law Project

Beyond focusing on our quality of assistance, we strive to increase access to civil legal services.

Clients in all 100 counties can access our services via walk-ins to one of our 25+ offices, or through partner referrals and community outreach events.



Our Offices

Because of our statewide reach, our Centralized Intake Unit processes the majority of our new clients and assigns cases to staff and volunteers according to client needs and eligibility.

**Last year, our helpline staff was able to process over 4,000 cases.**

For those that are unable to visit us in person we offer toll free helplines as well as online applications and services. Last year, we opened our new statewide housing helpline, and offered online services through our eight clinics and self help library.



**In 2021, we conducted 426 outreach events, serving over 26,000 attendees across multiple platforms.**

## Housing

The National Low Income Housing Coalition estimates that 25% of renter households in the state are extremely low income. Despite the increasing need, there remains a shortage of almost 200,000 units that are affordable enough for these households to rent.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, many of our clients and North Carolinians across the state were protected by much needed eviction moratoriums. In 2021, we saw these temporary protections disappear, but a housing crisis and economic hardship remained.

**In the last year, we took on over 8,700 housing cases. We prevented eviction, foreclosure or mobile home repossession in 2,055 of those cases and secured almost \$10.8 million in housing related benefits, awards and savings.**

### Help for homeowners

Robert and Patty had lived in their home for over 20 years and loved it dearly. With their last mortgage payment approaching, they were excited to officially own it. However, shortly after making their last payment, they were harassed by their lender for an additional payment. This payment was tens of thousands of dollars they didn’t have. Soon, their home was being foreclosed on and they were at risk of losing everything they worked for.

Worried about their future, they called Legal Aid for help. Almost immediately, our advocates discovered that the problem was due to a balloon payment

With increased funding from the North Carolina Office of Recovery and Resiliency, we were able to expand our highly successful eviction diversion program to reach 88 counties.

**Despite only launching in late October of 2021, our staff closed 122 cases and secured over \$32,000 in benefits and awards for our clients.**

With the emergency legal services provided by our Disaster Relief Project, we were able to help with securing assistance and payments, preserving and securing homeownership and repairing or replacing destroyed property in 190 cases.



Robert and Patty had unknowingly accepted in the terms of their mortgage. We were able to halt the foreclosure process, and help Mark and Jody get started with a repayment plan.

Thanks to the quick action of our advocates, Robert and Patty now own their home, and no longer have to worry about their future.



## Economic Stability

Many of our clients and their families rely on earned benefits and public assistance to secure stable, affordable housing, receive assistance with medical bills and put food on the table. A problem, delay or termination of these benefits can force those who are already struggling deeper into poverty. An unexpected medical appointment, cancelled coverage or mistakenly cut benefit can instantly result in their children going hungry or the family facing eviction. It is our job to ensure the benefits our clients rely on for a higher quality of life are appropriate, substantial and consistent. **We garnered over \$1.9 million in food, disability, and employment benefits and income maintenance in 2021.**

## Children and Seniors

We aim to protect children across the state by addressing issues they may face both in school and at home.

Our right to education project fights for children who experience racially discriminatory disciplinary actions, bullying, harassment, or neglect of their special education needs. The Child's Advocate provides support and legal representation for minors in custody and criminal proceedings, and ensures children with special immigrant juvenile status secure a stable living situation.

Senior citizens are at increased risk of abuse, financial exploitation and homelessness. Our Senior Law project assists seniors with medically necessary health care, income maintenance and end of life planning.



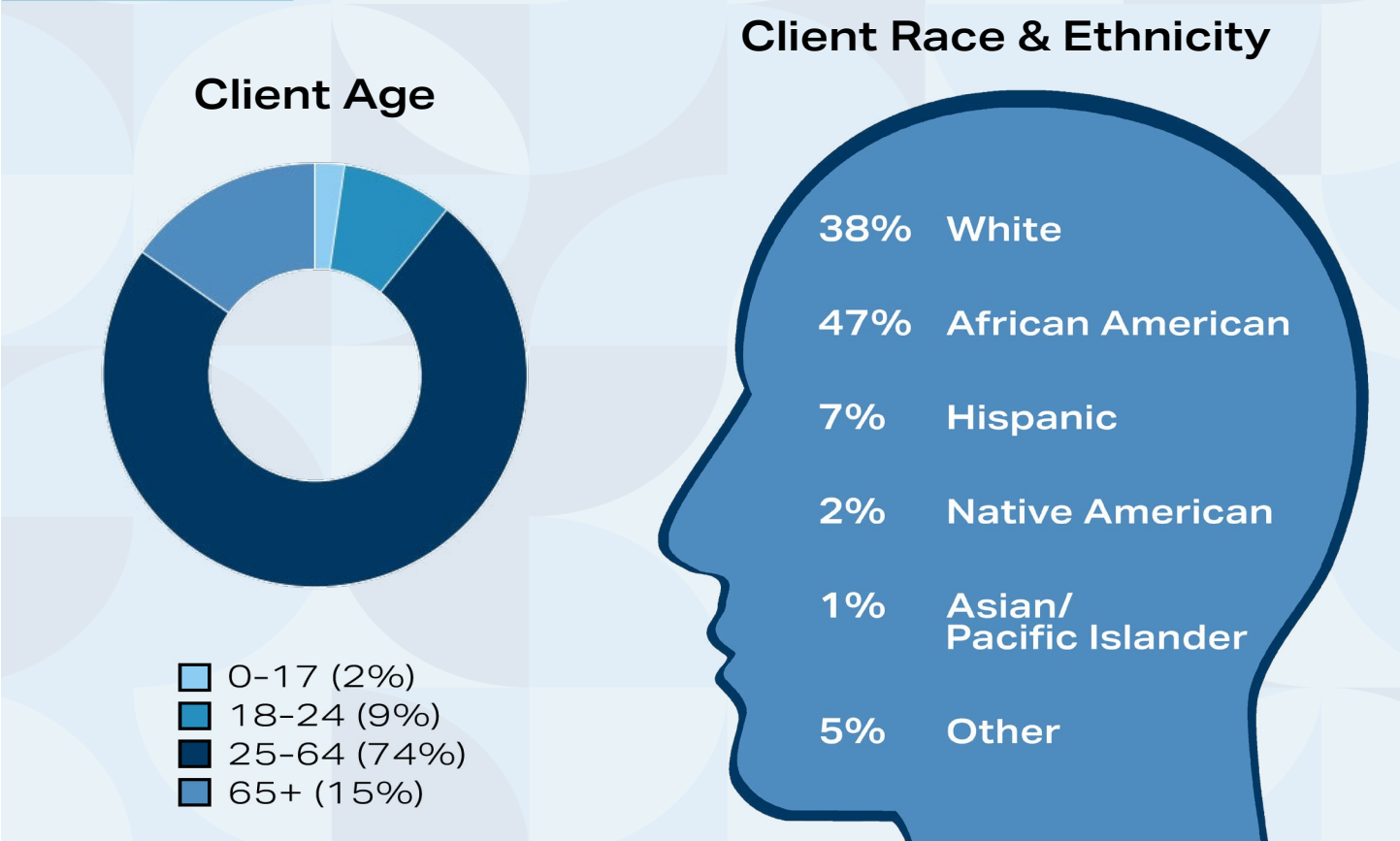
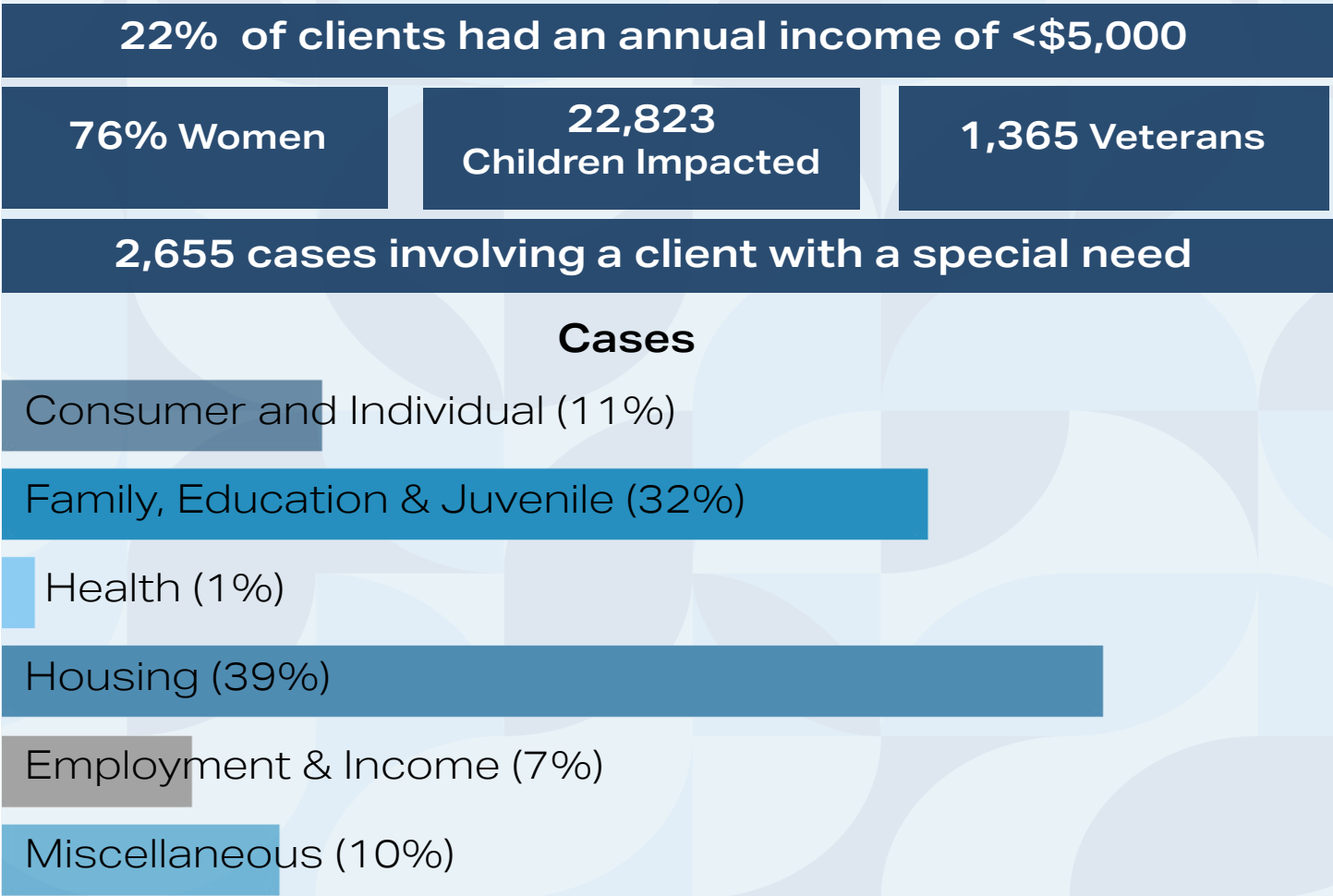
## Migrant Workers

Farmworkers are often subjected to overcrowded housing with poor sanitation and face frequent denial of health insurance and worker's compensation. Unsafe work environments, withheld wages and immigration issues can infringe on their civil rights and unfairly decrease their socioeconomic integration and participation in society.

Through our Farmworker Unit, we partner with other nonprofits, government agencies and medical clinics to ensure they are afforded equal opportunity to live and work safely and in accordance with federal, state, and international law.

**In 2021, we prevented the exploitation of farmworkers in 43 cases.**

## 2021 SNAPSHOT





Healthcare

Increasing medical costs and lack of affordable, adequate health care can rob people of their physical and financial independence, and drastically decrease their quality of life.

Our Medical Legal Partnerships include three statewide entities, one regional system and six clinics and centers serving the Charlotte area, the Triangle and the Triad. Physicians, nurses and social workers in these partnerships make it possible for us to connect our advocates with clients facing poor health. Our advocates resolve legal problems related to social determinants of health such as unsafe housing, interpersonal violence and food insecurity.

Many people struggle to understand the health insurance marketplace or may not know what recent changes to Medicaid in North Carolina mean for their health-care. This difficult to navigate landscape can mean clients are denied coverage or enrolled in plans that don't meet their specific needs. Our navigators help guide people through this process

**We are proud to say as the leader of the NC Navigator Consortium our NC Navigators were able to assist over 40,000 uninsured in utilizing HealthCare.gov.**



Scan the QR code above to read more about the NC Medicaid Ombudsman program in their inagural annual report.

In partnership with the NC Department of Health and Human Services, Pisgah Legal Services and Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy, we operate the NC Medicaid Ombudsman program.

Attorneys and representatives who work for the Ombudsman team help beneficiaries understand and solve problems with the state's new Medcaid Managed Care Program and ensure they are made aware of their rights and responsibilities when enrolling.



When Tessa learned of her son's medicaid termination she was shocked, and scared. Having been born premature, he still had many health problems, and now he could no longer see his pediatrician.

With help from NCDHHS, the NC Medicaid Ombudsman team was able to restore her son's medicaid coverage so he can continue to get the care he needs.

Criminal Record Expungement

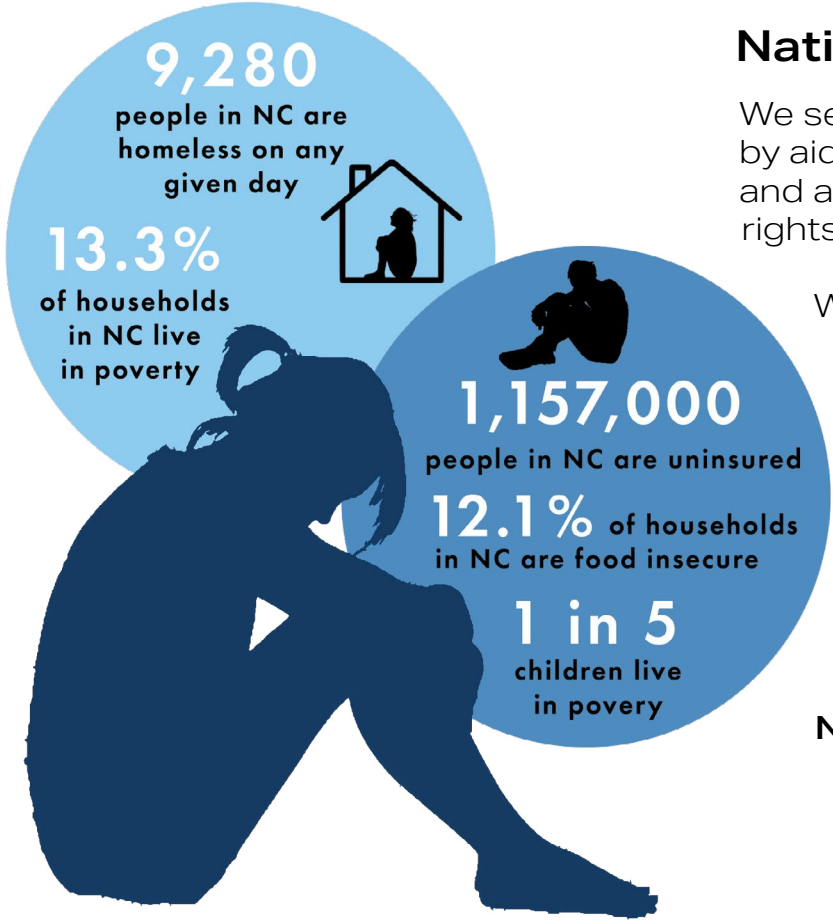
The burden of a criminal records can make finding reliable employment almost impossible. Fewer opportunities for a steady income puts economic security just out of reach for countless North Carolinians. Many with a criminal record are not only facing unemployment, but limited housing options also.

Often times, people are unaware that their previous convictions are eligible for expunction. Our state wide expunction project aims to reach as many in need as possible. Whether in person or via self help clinics, our clients can once again have full access to education, employment, housing, student financial aid, public benefits, military service and the right to vote.

In addition to our expunction efforts, we continue to operate free driver's license restoration clinics. Without a valid license, attending doctor's appointments,

qualifying for housing or benefits, and even picking up children from school become daily struggles.

**Over the last year, these projects and clinics have helped North Carolinians get a clean record and regain their independence in over 1,300 cases.**



Native Americans

We serve Native American communities by aiding in federal recognition efforts and actively enforce Indian housing rights.

We promote effective representation and quality decision-making in the tribal court system. We strive to protect Native American children by connecting them to the cultural support and resources they need to thrive in their communities.

**In 2021, we served over 330 Native American clients and their families.**



## Safety

To preserve and support the safety and stability of the individuals and families that seek our assistance, it is imperative that we meet the needs of domestic violence and human trafficking survivors. We help victims of violence and their families, including offering support for children involved in custody disputes.

We focus on protecting domestic violence victims and their children from abuse, maintaining their housing and economic security, and helping them and eligible family obtain legal status to remain in the U.S., so they are not afraid to seek representation and do not have to risk further interaction with their abuser.

**In 2021, we were able to obtain, enforce and renew civil protective orders, halt human trafficking practice, and secure safe, stable housing in 2,489 cases.**

**We protected children in 935 cases by securing safe custody and stable housing.**

### Safety for survivors

When she found out she was expecting her second child, Nicole decided it was time to leave her abusive relationship. She wanted to start over, and make sure she and her kids were safe. However, when she tried to leave, the violence only became worse.

Her abuser consistently stalked her, destroyed her property, and physically assaulted her. To make matters worse, Nicole's case against her abuser was not progressing in court, leaving her unprotected.

**"Legal Aid will never know how much what we did for her changed her life.**

**Receiving her lawful immigration status allowed her to finally come out of the shadows and live safely and freely, including getting her driver's license and opening a bank account.**

**She said could never explain how much being able to do these things without fear of being removed from the country means to her."**

**- Battered Immigrant attorney and her client**



Afraid, and unable to afford court fees, Nicole called Legal Aid for help.

Our advocate stood by Nicole, ensuring that her case was heard without more unnecessary delays. Legal aid was able to secure a Domestic Violence Protective order for Nicole, making sure that she and her children can live safely and securely.

## Veterans

Veterans give their time, talent, and even their lives to protect us. Yet, when they come home they experience increased rates of homelessness, mental health issues, and economic insecurity.

The Veterans Law project defends those struggling with financial exploitation, homelessness, disabilities, and survivors of military sexual trauma. Advocates can help veterans receive disability compensation, assist with discharge upgrades, and secure pension benefits.

**Over the last year, we have secured over \$96,000 in benefits for veterans.**



## Transgender Persons

We believe all North Carolinians should have access to education, employment, housing and the right to vote.

We work to help transgender persons understand, begin and complete the long process of legal name and gender change to ensure they receive identification that is representative of their identified gender and chosen name.

## Justice for veterans

Our client was a disabled Army veteran living in Fayetteville. One day, he received the shock of his life: An insurance company was suing him for \$10,000.

The company claimed he was the driver of a car that plowed into two parked cars, and it wanted the money to cover repairs. Our client wasn't the driver—the actual driver fled the scene but the car was registered in his name, so the evidence was stacked against him. Our client had owned the car but left it with a friend a year before the accident. The friend was supposed to sell the car for scrap but never did.

Larry Reeves, an attorney with Bailey & Dixon, LLP, in Raleigh, represented our client pro bono. Larry made a 132-mile round trip to Fayetteville to interview our client's friend and persuade him to testify in court if necessary.

Armed with the details of his investigation, Larry laid out his case to the insurance company's lawyers, who dropped the lawsuit.



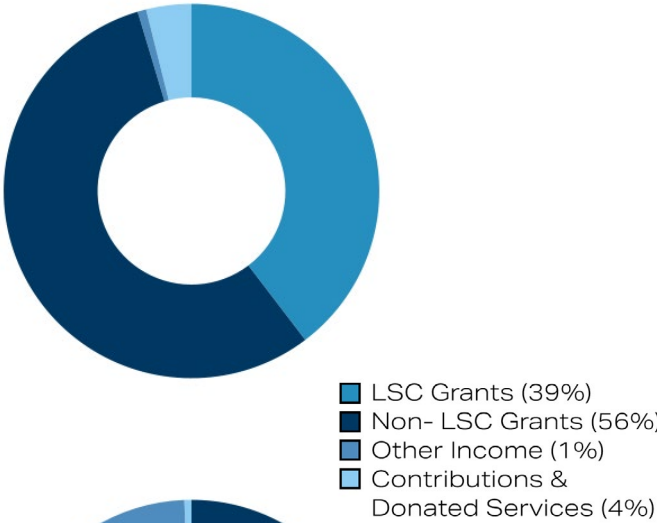
# BY THE NUMBERS

We are proud to generate resources for those working hard to to attain economic stability through benefits, awards and savings. Our work correcting benefit issues, providing free legal services and increasing access to economic stability for our neighbors in need the reduces the cost of the justice system, health care and social services.

To continue providing quality, accesible legal services, we dedicate the majority of our funding to programming. Based on our annual audit, our 2021 financials snapshot below shows that administrative costs accounted for less than 10% of expenses.

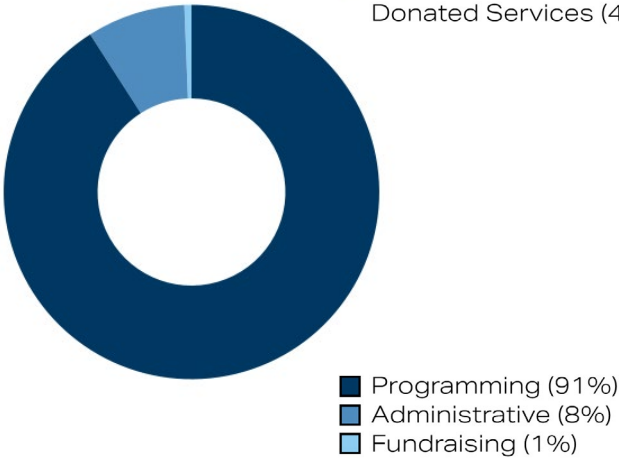
## TOTAL INCOME \$48.1 M

LSC Grants.....	\$18,606,566
Non-LSC Grants.....	\$26,156,588
Other Income.....	\$348,024
Contributions.....	\$1,687,542
Donated Services.....	\$1,347,828



## TOTAL EXPENSES \$47.2 M

Programming Expenses.....	\$43,006,910
Administrative Expenses.....	\$4,000,662
Fundraising Expenses.....	\$288,580



\$18.7 M

Generated in client awards, benefits and savings

19

Major Funders that gave over \$100,00

\$9.2 M

Pass- through funds distributed to 12 nonprofits

# Our Major 2021 Funding Sources (100,000+)

- Blue Cross Blue Shield of NC  
City of Durham  
City of Raleigh  
Governor’s Crime Commission  
Interest on Lawyers Trust Accounts (IOLTA)  
Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust  
Legal Services Corporation  
Mecklenburg County  
NC Division of Aging (Title III)
- NC Emergency Management  
NC Housing & Finance Agency  
NC Office of Recovery and Resiliency  
United Way  
U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services  
U.S. Dept. of Housing & Urban Development  
U.S. Dept. of Justice  
Wake County  
Wells Fargo  
Z.. Smith Reynolds Foundation

# OUR SUPPORTERS

Thank you all for your time and contributions as we work to keep our clients safe and healthy

Peter Gilbert

Peter Gilbert, Director  
Statewide Tenant Eviction Diversion Program

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2021 Supporters

Scan or click the corresponding QR code to make a donation, view a complete list of our 2021 supporters, or share this report with others

*\*To protect their identity, photos used in this publication do not depict actual clients of Legal Aid of North Carolina or the NC Medicaid Ombudsman Program.*